Copy under tape

12/9/71

Dear Bud,

The tape recorder didn't work when Jim met me, and I was still too upset about a ceiling-zero landing after an hour of stacking to think that I had two with me. So, although I can't begin to type up what I did and who I saw and what I learned, I'll try and remember a list of people based on which, should you so desire, you can later question me. It will have to be brief because there is an enormous stack of accumulated things and I had left too many undone when I started on this trip.

Arch was the only disappointment on it. He just wouldn't rise to the bait Mary gave him nor did he get any spontaneous ideas when they should have occurred to him during our conversations, of which we had, I think, four, one on his twice-daily very fast walk (he was surprised that this aging hulk could keep up with him even when he added an added length to it, Mary says). Mary says he has loosened some, which inspired wonder that one could be so tight even if broke - and she thinks he is worth 50 million. I have little doubt that if he can be inspired, Mary will try it. I also think there is little prospect.

Until I have a chance to listen to the tape of my first meeting with Jimmie, there is nothing I can add to what I told Jim and the enclosed. The second day at Brushy there was a sit-down, so no prisoners were seen by anyone, and the third it was not possible to tape, for we had to meet on the bench in the hall. He took what I had to say with equanimity. I do not know if he has contact with reality on his situation. He did say that someone, apparently not Stoner, is working on his lead (he pretends he doesn't remember a second phone number when I reminded him). He also promised me that he'd send this to me when he gets it, through Jerry.

I spent an hour and a half with Childress and one of his reporters. Good. Ditto with the editor-publisher of a chain of seven weeklies, Paul Page, who met me at Oak Ridge the second day. We had supper together. Childress has returned the Canale tape I loaned him. I do not know if Page or Yarborough did stories, as they were supposed to. There was a hot mayoral campaign. I was on WATE TV news and radio, and the radio was fed to other stations (Bill Bocher). A talk show wants me when I am there again. The notion that Tenn. was on trial more than Ray was well received, as was the concept that Washington had screwed Tennessee.

Bob and Wayne met me at the airport in Memphis. We chatted between planes. Both look good. There was not much time. We had a drink and that was about it.

Either New Orleans or Dallas made the trip a success. I concentrated on what has come to be called "the other side", with considerable success. Although Jim looks a bit better than he did when federally charged, he looks like hell. (Only Bethell, who loused up an evening of inquiry by accidental arrival in Larry Borenstein's Vaucressin Creole Cafe, looks worse. Tom also has been assisted by the Stern Foundation.) Jim says he has hospital staph and that the prognosis is that it will take a year to run its course. He was friendly, is not unfriendly to you. I didn't know he was in the office, but he was, and almost as soon as I got there he asked me in. He then said we'd have to have a good French lunch, but we compromised on The Plantation Room at the Roosevelt on Tuesday 11/30 when he didn't want to go out in damp weather. There is no visible interest in the assassinations. He is off on another Vince kick, an over-simplification based on a misunderstanding of The Pentagon Papers. In it the CIA is good guys and the military bad guys. He is still hung up on Vince. Joe told me they had almost literally fled New York last Tahnksgiving and stopped at Vince's - so fast that Jim left the hotel without paying his bill, which he later did by mail! (He appears not to have my relish for a gangup on the electronic media.) I did get what is represented as but cannot be the NOPD Intelligence Unit files on Ferrie and LHO. They are mostly clippings. I've loaned them to Mary, who, with Arch, has predictable interest in the FPCC, which, for the most part, they are, in clipping form. And I got something Jim was sent anonymously from Dallas, what seems to be an Offense Report of a fracas at Mrs. Bledsoe's involving a former FBI man named Grant, Jack Rubenstein and Alex Rideell! A Dallas deputy sheriff, to whom I gave a copy, will check it out. I'll bring it with me when I am next in DC, for I have to check with UPI on it.

UPI Dallas did a story on it, but their files are boxed in the basement and too hard to see. They said Washington or New York could check easier, and I know several people in DC. It is so pat I'd ignore it were it not for the apparent UPI story (retyped and incomplete). The FBI's name is Grant. I do not recall it.

Let me list "the other side", N.O., as best I recall:

Cecil Burglass (Marcello's lawyer on business matters); Larry Borenstein (who, from independent checks seems to have an association with hot money); Dean Andrews (twice); Monk Zelden (four times, twice at his invitation and twice by accident); Ben Smith (special prosecutor in the State case- I sought him out because he represented many of Leander Perez' enemies, on the Friday before the 11/22 hearing at which he was formally appointed - and I've asked him and Ivon for copies of all releases, hence have none to date.); Sal Panzeca (let's talk about this and other such thinks- he was helpful and can be more helpful - I think he is willing to be!); Jesse Core; Ed Planer; Milton Kaack (fired by the FBI); NOPD Narcs (new contact-they now have an interest in hard stuff reaching N.O. not through the port but via Canada - and the feds don't even talk to Garrison's office, where Harry Wheeler handles narcs cases); and other who, in the confusion and fatigue, do not come to mind. I was able to make a few N.O, notes while I was there, nights in the motel. I also spoke to Moo, Oser, Ivon and others, including Pena, not properly categorized as "the other side". Ivon is busier than ever. Moo has won 11 straight prosecutions and hadn't, he says, spoken to Jim in 2 months.

I think Jim will drop the Thornley and probably other cases. I did not interpose any opinion. Panzeca says they are serious about the Shaw civil suit and I told him that while I haven't given it to Jim for the perjury charge, I think I have what will whip them on this civil case (MOo, to whom I didn't give identifications, agrees), I will give it to the T&C people. When he pressed me for details, without telling him the proof or the more serious, I told him only that Shaw had not quit but had been fired and that Cobb had done it, personally. P. is satisfied that Russo and Oswald had met. He has no more faith in that Ferrie embellishment than I do. I also heard that Moo had known Russo before he went to Baton Rouge, to see him but didn't have time to ask him. (Moo also knew Ferrie from the Lakefront, or didn t you know?) Sal has two notebooks of stuff on Russo that he didn't use. I do not know what it says, but I think I could get it when I am back there again. I think we should have it, but I couldn't ask for it while there is pending litigation and I couldn't pay for the xeroxing. Only Jim's personal slur ("that insignificant little Dago bastard" - any one of which would have turned the diminutive man on) kept him in the case in which he did all the out-of-court work. Small things are so big!

I'll not here go into what I learned about the case(s) against Jim. We can talk about it better when I have seen subsequent reporting. I had many sources, including those to whom the feds had leaked. It may interest you and some of your Hill Democrat friends that the indictment of former U.S. Att'y Louis LeCoeur was seriously considered. Ben Smith immediately spotted what I had warned Lou about, a malfeasance rap, the only thing that seems tenable from the affidavits. For all of what I take to be legal insanity in the State case Jim takes personal credit!

I located all the places in the notes he identified as Thompson's from NAACP (I don't believe, from what I learned in Dallas from Earl Golz) listed in what May hgave me except two. One of those my Narcs contact thinks may well be St. Claude, but by the time I could get to him there was barely time to get together with Guy, who is separated from his wife -who didn't tell me -and who represents Boasberg in the pinball cases. So, I couldn't check the possibilities of that out. If I didn t give Jim a copy of my memo on the addresses, I typed it in N.O. and when I can get to filing it will separate a copy for you. One is possibly exciting, 1808 Carondelet. I have pictures of all, some still in the camera and some being processed already. Despite Ivon's opinion that there seems to be no significance, the addresses do seems to cluster. If I didn't give you or Jim copies of those pages of the T notes, let me know and I will. I have them, having made them for this trip. JER professes ignorance. (He did seem mildly interested in the new Foreman poop, and I think that after the tax season, when I do not have to take Lil to daily work, I should see the lawyer in the New Haven case, with whom I have established contact and gotten some of the files.)

One of those I forgot is David Chandler. He was friendly, mildly helpful, and I expect him here for a weekend soon. He is doing a book on the Mafia.

Everybody agrees that Marcello has never had anything to do with the hard stuff. There is some belief that another family might have arranged things to make it look like he is involved in what interests us. Burglass says he believes not even the feds would go for that. He says. I have no way of knowing what he really thinks. Maybe he is sincere. He thinks M's federal trouble is now over. He says. (In the assault case, he also says the FBI report doesn't even allege that the agent claiming to have been struck was hit.)

When David is here I think it wiser to feed him to Baker through Larry Finley rather than through either of us and I have discussed this with Larry by phone. David can be more helpful if he is disposed to be. I think he may yet decide to be. We have always had a not-unfriendly relationship. He readily accepted my invitation to weekend here. He will be in the area anyway.

Some of those I saw in Dallas specified confidentiality and some should have. This also serves our interest if they are to be sources in the future, which is lamentably long, as it now looks. I merely list to begin with: Henry Wade; Allan Sweatt; three Parkland doctors; two (large) bank vice-presidents (imagine!); Dean Storey (Texas Court of Inquiry); several media people (WBAP-TV asked me to appear and used 200 feet in two newscasts); several other deputies and police; probably others. I spent two days going through files I was able to open, but that permitted merely a glimpse. I was able to have Mary accepted as my confidential secretary, and on a basis of confidence and that it is for me she will be able to go through these more leisurely when she has time. I have learned much more about Ruby, sicker than I'd thought, and now have seen some DPD reports that I haven't seen in the Archives or the Library of Congress microfilm. An account of Ruby's tastes and practises had best be verbal.

Holland McCombs, retired Time-Lifer, was friendly and may be helpful. He had some suggestions that may in time be of use.

Found two "buffs" in Dallas, possibly liberal. They took me to lunch, but seemed to be ducking meeting Mary.

Sue and I are friends. She was of some help in transportation. Boxley wanted a confrontation which he used as less than that. It kept Mary up too late and, I think, discomforted her a bit when he admitted he had no real case, only the beginning of an investigation at the time JG was about to use it, as you know. He claimed not to know this and to have been afraid for his life. Mary's knowledge comes from him, but she told me before Box came that Joel Palmer told him the office was going to kill Bill. He seemed anxious to prove, as I think he did, that once upon a time he really did work for the CIA. I hadn't believed it. And it does make me wonder a bit about some of the nonses about which he convinced Jim. Paul R. had some interesting things to say, but they can wait until we meet. About Ruby as a CI. Mary is unwell, but I don't know why. Buck seems to be intent on taking her to the doctor, or had that notion when he took me to the airport (I didn't rent a car in Dallas because it was cheaper not to.) We both think a combination of things, including tensions and her forgetting to take her thyroid after that long night with Boxley may be part, if notall. Jimmy Lee's silence really frightened her. She had expected to be called to Germany momentarily. She wanted to be there for the anticipated Caesarian. But there was none, in the last minute, and May is overjoyed that the almost-six-pounds new granddaughter is named Mary Elizabeth! That is when she wept! She and Buck, who are not well off financially now as a consequence of more progeny expense (this time innocent), are planning to go to Germany as soon as they can make the arrangements, meaning both funds and getting time, for both. Mary's firm and the partner for whom she works are deep into enormous litigation. Despite this she wasn't well enough to go to work, the last two days I was there and stayed in the house the last, a Saturday. She also didn't go to the airport Sunday a.m...Stevens Point went well, as it had with the others earlier. A number seemed to regard some of the earlier presentations a bit farout. Not Jim's...I'm pretty sure I spent less than we estimated. I'll refund after the charges are all in.

Something developed with my car. Does any of thismean anything to you? I got into it and it started immediately after Jim debriefed me. So easily I presume you ran it periodically. But it seemed to be heavy underfoot. And it got excessively hot. Neither had happenedbefore. I didn't realize this until the Beltway. By then there was jo cahone to stop until I was past the I70S construction, at about the Washingtonian Motel. When I shifted into neutral from drive the car kept going, and it was soon apparent that in neutral it was really in drive, hence had been in second all along when positioned in drive. I then kept going, and the temperature indication continued to rise. By the time I was at clarksburg it was at the boiling mark. I kept going because Lil's cousins have the Pontiac agency at Hyattstown. However, they had moved to a place they were building when last I had been there. This wasted stop required that I shift into reverse and lo! thereafter the shift indications matched the reality. And the car was not hot. We could remove the radiator cap by hand. They recommended taking to a Chrysler dealer on the chance the false reading comes from a bad ground, which can be very hard to trace today. I have an appointment for Tuesday a.m. There is, as yet, no explanation for this automatic trouble. Tjis a.m., the first time I've been on the car since getting home, the same things. And the same return to normal in the automatic once the thing warmed up. Until then Drive was second and Neutral was drive. So, I'm wondering if anything happened when you moved it, etc., that could explain or suggest why these things happened when the car was not in use. In 95,000, I've not had to make a single repair. Only normal maintainance. No oil use even!

If you recall the 11/15 letter to Eugene I wanted you to approve before I mailed it, the enclosures, his response and mine to it, indicate we may get this stuff if you write him telling him that we are, indeed,pursuing Ray's desires. Please read my letter and see if you agree that we really want and need <u>everything</u> he has. He can't know the meaning some letters can have. Because I was sending a copy to Jim I made no reference to the silencer. I think you should ask him for everything taken from him by the vobbies and tell him frankly that the prosecution is refusing to give anything fresher than yesterday's sweat. It ought not hurt to put Eugene & Co. politely on the spot. I don't believe the explanation Jimmy gave me for the silencerplans, so I didn t want to go into specifics.

I haven't begun to catch up on the mail yet. However, I felt I should make immediate response to Bob's interesting project tracing the alleged LHO weapons. It is enclosed in case you want toread it. I think it is a good project, if I lack confidence in the beginning with what I regard as unlikely, the emphasis on explosive or other arcane projectiles, which were entirely unnecessary when normal commercial rounds were more than adequate. Bob is welcome to go over my extensive files on this stuff. I think if he is going to go further with this he should and that he should then consult with Hoch. Taking one aspect of significant evidence or missing evidence like this is historically, if not immediately, quite worthwhile.

Please tell Bill I've heard nothing from Outerbridge & Dienstfrey. By now maybe Bill has read what I gave him. After the car is out of the shop, when he has time, I'd like to talk to him about that. And ask him to consider whether the Belin piece, which I haven't read yet, doesn't bear on malice, where he , that is Bill, doesn'tyet have the entire record. That may be an open back door where, as with the clothing pix, a defeat may be a victory.

Best,